

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE GRANT RECIPIENT FOR 1998: GREENSGROW PHILADELPHIA PROJECT

Grant Recipient: Greensgrow Farm
Grant Title: Greensgrow Philadelphia Project
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Project Period: 5/15/98 - 5/15/99
Affected Areas: New Kensington Neighborhood in Philadelphia, PA

INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT RATIONALE

In 1995, a report by Philadelphia City Planning uncovered the existence of 15,000 vacant lots and 27,000 vacant structures in Philadelphia city. In reaction, groups such as the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society have been striving to find new uses – such as community gardens – for the vacant areas. In 1997, the **Greensgrow Philadelphia Project** (Greensgrow) was founded by Mary Corboy and Tom Sereduk who took the idea of inner-city gardens one step further: to create not only community gardens but a prototype for *profit*-making, inner city farms which would address land re-use issues and create jobs for low-skilled workers as well.

The Greensgrow project serves two major purposes: 1) to find ways to successfully re-use post-industrial brownfields and vacant lots for agricultural businesses; and 2) to create a profitable business base in deteriorating neighborhoods suffering from the loss of Philadelphia's manufacturing sector. Thus far, Greensgrow has worked with organizations such as the Wharton Small Business Development Center and the New Kensington Community Development Corporation (NKCDC) to create a working model for successful urban agriculture operation and overcome city governance issues which currently limit the presence of urban farms.

Greensgrow anticipates the establishment of a conglomeration of 10 small urban farms operating in the Philadelphia area, united by a joint marketing and distribution system and creating fifty-plus jobs and utilizing 10 acres of vacant land at minimal capital costs. Greensgrow's ultimate goal is to build a model by which other Community Development Corporations can incorporate urban agriculture schemes into their open space and economic development models. In this way the Greensgrow Philadelphia Project will serve not only to increase sustainability efforts in the Mid-Atlantic region but throughout the U.S.

SCOPE OF WORK

Funding from the Sustainable Development Challenge Grant will be used over a one-year period to achieve the following:

- Train three employees to manage farm;
- Run trials on the growth of tomatoes and herbs in different mediums;
- Increase lettuce production by 25%;
- Increase labor efficiency;
- Maximize site space to include a seasonal packing/storing/refrigeration area, seeding/germination area, and an office; &
- Find alternative uses for lot area during non-growing season

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Idyll Development Foundation

New Kensington Community Development Corporation

Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development

React Environmental Services

Ben Franklin Technology Center

In addition to the above partner organizations, Greensgrow has worked with the *Wharton Small Business Development Center* “to refine certain aspects of their business”; Pennsylvania State University’s *Agriculture Analytical Laboratories* to test urban growth crops for affects of airborne particulate matter; the *Reading Terminal Farmers Market Trust* in regards to “fresh produce issues”; the *Pennsylvania Horticulture Society* (PHS); the *Norris Square Civic Association*; and *The Chef’s Collaborative*.